

School-Based Behavioral Health Screening Initiative

⇒ Frequently Asked Questions ⇐

February 2015

- Q: Does the school have a duty to report to the Department of Community Based Services (DCBS) when a student screens positive for substance use? (Note: The GAIN-SS is a self-report tool with questions that ask about substance use.)**
- A: According to Commissioner of DCBS Commissioner, the Child Protective Services regulation is specific here: if a child is *permitted* to use drugs or alcohol under circumstances that create a risk to the emotional or physical health of the child and because the tool relies on the self-report of the child's substance use, the requirement for reporting would be met if the school has reason to believe this child is using and the student says the parents are aware and are allowing it.
- Q: If a referral is made from the school to an outside provider agency for a substance use assessment, will it result in a referral to DCBS?**
- A: According to the DCBS Commissioner, unless the school has reason to believe the parent knows about the student's substance use and is not doing anything to help the child or remedy the situation, it would not likely result in a referral to DCBS.
- Q: Can only the substance use questions on the GAIN-SS be asked and yield a valid and reliable score?**
- A: The School-Based Behavioral Health Screening Initiative evaluator and consultant for the GAIN-SS indicated that "the psychometric properties of the individual scales (SA, CV) will not be impacted. The [tool's] report will have missing information of course and the Total Disorder screener will not be helpful." So, it appears that schools can use only the substance use items and not impact the reliability and validity of the measurement tool.

January – December 2014

- Q: What is the purpose of the screening; is it to identify substance use, mental health conditions, or both?**
- A: The purpose of this screening is to identify the need for further assessment of a substance use or mental health disorder. The GAIN-SS Screener identifies both.
- Q: What is the expectation for the district to obtain parental permission?**
- UPDATED ANSWER:** It is recommended that for parental/caregiver notification is provided and consent received prior to screening a student for behavioral health issues. Please use the "Model Notice & Consent Form" provided in February 2015 as a template for notice and consent.
- Q: What reason should school staff give parents for screening?**
- UPDATED ANSWER:** You have been provided a "Model Notice & Consent Form" with recommended language, but if you feel that you need additional language, you might want to consider the following, or similar: *Because your child spends a great deal of time at school, teachers and other school staff are often in a position to recognize early signs of behavior that may indicate academic, mental health, or substance use problems. Screening is a way for school personnel to quickly determine whether a student would benefit from further assessment and, if so, to get the help they need.*

Frequently Asked Questions: Continued

Q: Are there expectations regarding who administers the screening tool?

A: It is up to each school to identify who can become GAIN-SS screeners. There is no limitation to the number of screeners in each school, but it is recommended that each school identifies at least 2 – 3 people. Anyone identified as a GAIN-SS screener must be trained on the tool.

Q: Are there any special considerations given to the screening results and the use of this data for students identified with special needs?

A: The GAIN-SS can be used with student with special needs. If there are concerns that a student may not understand the questions on the screening tool, there is a cognitive impairment screener that can be used to help make this determination. If the screening tool is used with a student with special needs, the questions can be read to a student and it may take a little longer to make sure they understand the questions. It is up to each district on how the screening results data is used.

Q: We need more information on the screening tool (scoring criteria, interpretation of scores, etc.). School districts do not diagnose mental health conditions from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). We are concerned that this could be misconstrued.

A: Information related to the GAIN-SS scoring criteria, interpretation of scores, etc. is provided during the training on the tool. For the purposes of this Initiative, we have set a score threshold that should trigger a referral for an additional assessment by a behavioral health professional. Screening tools are not diagnostic, and therefore, you will not be diagnosing mental health conditions. The administration of the GAIN-SS will simply determine if there is a need for further assessment to be conducted by a professional.

Q: We are concerned about who will have access to and use the screener. We feel we need to be cautious when putting the screener into the hands of untrained mental health professionals.

A: Your district's School-Based Behavioral Health Screening Initiative primary point of contact will be your district's GAIN Local Administrator; this person will determine who will have log in access to use the screening tool and log in information to be trained in the use the of the screener. The only people with the ability to use the online screening web tool will be those you give log in information to.

Q: When the state says the screener can lead to further assessment, what does this mean? A school psychoeducational assessment? Outside evaluation?

A: The screening identifies the potential for a mental health or substance use issue and recommends that a student be further assessed by a behavioral health profession. Ideally, this would mean that you refer the student to a local behavioral health provider for that further assessment.

Q: Who is responsible for payment of an additional assessment?

A: **UPDATED ANSWER:** Once a student is referred to an outside behavioral health professional for further mental health and/or substance use assessment, the cost of any assessment, evaluation and/or treatment resulting from a referral by the district based on the results of the GAIN-SS will most likely be the responsibility of the family, not the school district. This information is included in the "Model Notice & Consent Form" provided in February 2015.

Q: Many districts already use other threat assessment and/or screening tools. We use a different threat assessment document in place. How would the use of this this fit into this Initiative?

A: The GAIN-SS screener does not identify threat but the potential for substance abuse or mental health needs. You can use this tool in conjunction with your threat assessment tools to get a better picture of a student's comprehensive needs, if you so choose to do so.

